

Mountains, Plains, and the Sea

Peloponnesos. Many villages are snowbound for two, three, or even four months. The government has learned the necessity of helping these people stockpile their basic stores of food well in advance of the cold weather to avoid starvation or at least the malnutrition which would otherwise occur in these isolated villages.

Even around Athens, so very near the sea, the mountains take on an Alpine effect. On a January day in 1953, when early jonquils were blooming in the gardens around the villas, a thirty-minute drive took us to the top of Mount Parnes where people were skiing in two feet of snow, which lasted from three to four weeks.

In addition to the climatic role they play, the mountains become places of refuge when invaders overrun the country. Here the revolutionaries against the Turk began to flex their muscles prior to the beginning of the revolution in 1821. The dwellers of the cities and the monks in the monasteries may have kept Greek culture, in the sense of civilization, alive, but the villagers kept the spirit of independence alive. Over and over again those who really know Greece would say, "you have not seen our country until you leave the main highways and go up into the mountains to talk with the hardy peasants there." This tradition of the mountains is a conditioning influence in Greek thought and life along with the tradition of the sea.

What, one wonders, do the peasants think of the rough terrain about them? Do they personify any of the peaks or make their summits the dwelling place of gods, as did the Greeks of old? The old Greek pantheon, it seems, has been liquidated by the Christian God and the collection of saints revered by the Eastern Orthodox Church. "Thou hast conquered, Galilean," Swinburne's classic pagan wept. One does find on most peaks a monastery to St. Elijah, a whitewashed building reflecting the slanting sun in early morning or late afternoon. Students of these matters seem to agree that Elijah (Elias), who disappeared in a chariot of flame, may have superseded Helios and his fiery steeds.¹⁴ The top of the mountain from ancient times has been the place to worship the sun.

Particular mountains, however, do have their own local traditions. One of the peaks of Panaitolikon in Central Greece is called the Mountain of the Old Woman, as the following legend explains.

Once upon a time an old woman had finished pasturing her sheep below for the winter and had moved them up into the mountains for summer grazing. The month of March was almost ended, so the woman said: "March, you can go away; I don't need you any more for I have had a good winter below and will have a good summer here." But March in its anger borrowed one day from February, giving him thirty-one days. On that day there was a heavy storm. The old woman froze and turned into marble and there she now stands. That's why they call those heights the Mountain of the Old Woman.

¹⁴[Throughout the Pindus area and the higher parts of the Peloponnesos - ANALYST]

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TOBACCO GROWING IN THRACE

249 During an interview with some peasants in the office of the commune
276 secretary of Toxotae in Thrace during May 1955, I was surprised to see
656 some of the men pull out pink cigarette paper in which they expertly rolled
cigarettes for a leisurely smoke.

"But why the pink paper?" I wanted to know.

"We are tobacco producers," they answered with an air of distinct pride.
"We can keep some of the crop for our own use, but must use pink paper
to distinguish our cigarettes from those that are bought."

"Yes," a gendarme added. "Any time I see a person smoking a pink
cigarette I can go up to ask for a certificate showing that he is a tobacco
grower and thus entitled to 'roll his own!'"

249 This conversation, which lasted for more than four hours, gave me an
123 even better understanding of tobacco farming than I had gained on previ-
312 ous trips, as did frequent visits in the fields with the peasants who were
transferring the plants from the seedbeds to the carefully prepared land or
hauling barrels of water in their oxcart from a spring or well to the place
where the planting was going on. What was most helpful of all, however,
was the intimate story of one tobacco village, as described in the Near East
Foundation study mentioned earlier. It gave me a deeper realization of the
problems that the people there continue to face.

621 Dafnon, a village of 1145 people in 1952, is northwest of the city of
162 Xanthe. This community, like so many in Northern Greece, was settled by
167 Greek refugees from Asia Minor and the Pontus following the departure
of 127 Turkish families in 1924. By 1935, 294 families had moved in,
attracted as they were by the rich vegetation, the good climate of this semi-
mountainous area, and the possibility of raising a high-priced product such
as tobacco. When the first official land redistribution was carried out in
1935, and a second in 1938, it became apparent that the allotments were
too small for the support of a family, and so people began to leave. Today
there are 255 families.

621 The village, covering slightly over 70 acres, sprawls over a hill. Two
36 former Turkish mosques have been converted into Greek Orthodox
churches; six grocery shops have total assets of less than \$1700; three of
the six coffeehouses attract the young men because each has a gramophone
and a battery radio; the village school, destroyed along with many of the
houses during the guerrilla war in 1948, was rebuilt in 1950. Outside the
village is an athletic field on which 30 young men, members of the sports
club, practice faithfully in an effort to uphold their reputation as the best
football (soccer) team in the area. In the evening, the streets are dark,
for Dafnon has no electricity and its people must rely upon kerosene lamps.

Of the 255 families previously mentioned, 220 own land; 32 own no

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Woman's Work Is Never Done

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bacco-growing parts of Thrace, a child of six may be expected to help to the extent of his ability. In general, by the time he is five or six, he is asked to watch a younger brother or sister or to watch the sheep or turkeys; when not doing this, he can join children's play groups. By the age of fourteen a boy is already a competent field hand. A girl between eight and ten years of age is given little jobs, but between ten and fourteen she assumes much heavier burdens.

Yet life is not all work. Children in Greece also have their periods of play, frequently under the watchful eye of some woman in whose yard the children's play groups may be found. Some of the children, however, prefer to play away from home — along the street, around a fountain, or at the school yard — so as not to be called upon to do the chores which would be assigned if they were at hand. It is remarkable how many games can be played without toys. Much can be done with stones and little pieces of broken glass (where no marbles are available), and what dolls can be made by little girls from a few nondescript rags! Occasionally I would find two or three barefooted children damming up a stream near some pigs lying in the mud; or boys would roll iron hoops on the highway while their family worked in a field close by. So intent would the children be on their play that they would seem oblivious to approaching buses or autos.

One of the children's games played throughout much of Greece is a form of jacks. In the village of Laimos, near Lake Prespa, the children playing it called it *vroche* (rain) although elsewhere in Greece it is usually referred to as *pentovola*. Instead of using a ball, on whose bounce the jacks must be picked up and the ball caught, the girls threw a stone in the air and picked up other stones in time to catch the one that had been tossed. Pebbles figure also in the game called "forty stones." Eight stones are put in a straight line, with forty on each side of the center. At a signal all must run to a set place and return before the girl called "the gatherer" picks up all of the stones into a pile. If the gatherer wins, she sits on the pile and pretends to be a setting hen.

There are the familiar games of hide-and-seek (only the Greek children spit on the tree serving as home base rather than touch it), drop-the-handkerchief, cat-and-mouse. Many of the games require special songs which the girls especially seem to enjoy. Boys at play seem much less organized and more apt to argue over the fine points of the game.

Quite often we came upon children simply sitting still. "What are you doing?" we asked. "Oh, we are telling riddles." Not all of these we heard would have much meaning to an outsider, but some of them had almost a universal touch:

My lamb, my little curly lamb, climbs, eats, and gets fed on grass, drinks water, and dies. (A fire on the mountain.)

Around, around it's round and in the middle it is long. (A well.)

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Recreational Function. Recreation, as such, in organized form is not found in the villages and yet there is plenty of recreation, which the farmers enjoy throughout the year. For older people to play ball or athletics seems very childish. Certain traditional customs handed down from generation to generation provide both group, inter-village, inter-neighborhood, inter-relative and family recreation. For example when a baby is born the whole larger family rejoices and have feasts, when the baby is baptized the whole neighborhood and relatives are invited to join in the ceremonial feast. When a member of the family gets married the whole village participated with their musical instruments. The marriage feast lasts three days, until everybody is exhausted from children of five years to grown ups of 65 years, by dancing, eating and singing. Another recreation is the celebration of their name days. It is surprising to note that only the name day of the male person is observed more than the female name day.

Then come the numerous religious holidays at dif /34/ ferent seasons when inter-village recreation takes place. The village that celebrates its saint day provides shelter and food for those that came from remote villages. At these holidays or Saint days takes place something similar to that of the county fairs in the United States. After the church service the people gather around the church yard and, with their colorful dresses, dance in a big circle while musical instruments play their local songs. Sometimes as many as 250 people dance together. The intensity and the length of the holiday depends on the importance of the Saint.

The year's most important recreational holiday is at Easter period. Three days are devoted for its celebration and the whole village, friends or enemies eat at the common table, drink from the common glass and dance at the common village dancing place. This is the time of the year when all those that have plenty give to those that do not have. The ovens of the village fill the village with the odor of roast lamb, cookies and other kinds of pastry. The wine cellars open and the best drinks are offered to the good

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help the father and mother in the struggle of life. At certain times of the year when there is less work at home and in the fields the neighborhood children come together and play hide and seek. When boys and girls reach the age of 11-12 they separate and seldom play together anymore. The child in Megali Vrisi has a hard time to express its freedom.

The school organizes picnics at which the teachers teach the children how to sing and dance. These picnics are the only active days that provide ample time for the children to play.

Music Music is something which is never taught but it is there always. From children to grown-ups all sing and dance singing is a part of their dance it is learned easily. There are no books or music notes and the musical instrument players never learned with notes but just by hearing. Children going to the fields sing, people working in groups in the fields sing, and groups returning home from harvest sing. People sing at the coffee houses, at their homes and in the woods. Shepherds sing with their fiddles and peddlers advertise their goods with a song. Singing runs through the church services from beginning to the end and when the women dress up the bride they sing all night to her. No one writes any song to remember it. They are handed down from generation to generation and sung so often that there is no fear of forgetting them or losing them. Singing is a part of their recreational life, a part of their courtship and a part of their expression of appreciation of nature. The philosophy of life of those people is built on tradition and singing comes voluntarily to express themselves. Some of their songs have to do with incidents of heroism or suffering and torture. There are songs that move one to tears and there are others that move one to sacrifice everything he possesses. Even the happiest songs are tinged with an air of sadness. It is probable that their ancestors have been through gloomy periods which has influenced their songs. May be these wars will create more such songs among the village people /39/ for their beloved ones who were killed during the spring months. Each girl who lost her sweetheart in the war will make a song for him and sing it while working in the fields.

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fertilizing methods or rotation methods or introduction of new legume plants or a new variety of wheat. As a rule, their effect on the farmers is great with definite results.

Thus the future farmers of Megali Vrissi, working cooperatively, felt the need of adopting new methods and passing on to others the results of their /74/ investigations. It is surprising to know how effectively the cooperative project has tied up these fellows in undertaking to do other jobs useful for their village.

The individual project idea was a failure. People who live in the same village, still under the patriarchial type of family life and whose problems are so closely interwoven, cannot help but cooperate and support whole-heartedly cooperative work.

This very same idea led those boys to build a community hall and a stage for theatrical shows. The whole structure was built by personal work and what money was saved from theatrical shows at Christmas. The group learned Christmas carols and sang them to every house in the village. The contributions from this event were used for the poor of the village. The small reforestation project which was started by this group has led to the development of the "Day of the Green", at which day everyone in the village planted a tree on the hill.

The yearly athletic day event that provides an enjoyable gathering for the village was planned by the young men.

/75/ One can easily foresee the future of such a community which will be handled by people who learned to cooperate so well in their youth. This vocational education meant more to the lives of these young men than what they got from the grammar school.

Invasion of adult education. The Greek government, feeling great responsibility toward these people, who during the wars of 1912-1913, 1914-1918, and 1920-1922, lost the chance of attending schools, provided special evening lessons in each village. The lessons were handled by the teacher in the local school and thus many of these men and women had a chance to learn how

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Local Holidays. The Greek Orthodox Church has more saint days than the calendar of the year could take care of. The church calendar used to provide more than half of the days of the year as observable holidays which naturally provided more leisure time for the people. More leisure time meant more churches, more spending and more monasteries. With the advance of the materialistic civilization these holidays have been greatly reduced, but still there are 94 church holidays for the farmer to observe besides Sundays and the national holidays. These holidays provide ample leisure time /97/ for the farmers to drink and dance. The village musicians get out on the village square and call out those that celebrate their name days. One by one the big circle is formed in the village square. If the Greek Orthodox Church has nothing to serve to the people by building up their religious beliefs, it has enough holidays to relieve the people from life's struggle. Megali Vrisi celebrates St. Nicholas day as its village holiday. This is the day when every corner of every house is scrubbed and cleaned. The village yards are well cleaned. The church committee prepares a special program featuring certain events. Prizes are given to the best wrestlers and to the best dancers. These events draw a large crowd from the neighboring villages. On this special day the livestock of the church is sold in auction. People donate to the church either poultry, calves, sheep, lambs, or goats for the dreams they dreamed about the saint of the church or the help they received from the church when they prayed. These can be considered as sacrifices which people make to the church. The church committee sells the livestock on this occasion. This custom is very similar to that of the primitive peoples of worshiping their gods by sacrifices.

/98/ The holiday has the following effects on the peoples:

1. Gives them a chance to clean up their houses.
2. Makes them hospitable for they have to take care of the visitors.
3. The day they forgive each other and forget the old grievances.

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